

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS¹

"This law of the modern world, that power tends to expand indefinitely, and will transcend all barriers abroad and at home, until met by superior forces, produces the rhythmic movement of History. . . . The threatened interests were compelled to unite for the self-government of nations, the toleration of religion, and the rights of men. And it is by the combined efforts of the weak, made under compulsion, to resist the reign of force and constant wrong, that, in the rapid change but slow progress of four hundred years, liberty has been preserved, and secured, and extended, and finally understood."

LORD ACTON.

WHEN in the early days of the war the amateur politician observed that the futility of The Hague Conference was not proved, he was expressing, *more suo*, a distorted political truth. For at The Hague the organism of a world-state had been disclosed; and the war, which is anarchy among states, demonstrated that the world-state had as yet no life. The League of Nations is the attempt to frame that political organism in order that the international spirit may find in it a home and an instrument; that is, a body. For the international mind is a new reality, and the old State cannot house it.

"Nature made men citizens," said Aristotle. But of what city? To what other men, and to how many of them, are we "naturally" bound in an association of which the object is government—that is, at the lowest estimate, the enforce-

¹ This paper by Miss Rose Sidgwick, prepared for delivery as a discourse at the Rice Institute on the occasion of the visit of the British Educational Mission to that institution, has a peculiar and pathetic interest, for it is one of the last things Miss Sidgwick wrote. At the close of her tour in the United States as one of the seven members of the British Educational Mission, and two days only before she was due to sail for England, she caught influenza, which developed into pneumonia, and she died a fortnight later in New York on December 28, 1918.

This paper gives some indication of the loss she is to the world of thought, which, together with the tragic loss of her experience and wisdom in carrying on the work of promoting interchange and understanding between university students and teachers on both sides of the Atlantic, cannot be too deeply regretted.—C.F.E.S.

ment of order and elementary justice? It is habitually assumed that for modern times the "city" of Aristotle is what is called indifferently the "country" or the "State." Yet that this should be so is in itself startling, for when Aristotle said "polis" he meant a town like Athens, as big as Portsmouth, with less than a quarter of the population of Manchester. The frog is swollen to the size of a bull; is it certain that its anatomy is unchanged in the process?

The nation-state first realized itself generally in the sixteenth century, when Catholic unity was rent, and when Machiavelli had taught the secular national governments that they should "suffer neither limit nor equality." In England the doctrine bore fruit first in internal autocracy; the power which was formidable under Queen Elizabeth became intolerable under the Stuarts, and the three centuries intervening between James I and this year (1918) have seen the expansive power, of which Lord Acton speaks, checked by the claim of subjects to "self-government, religious toleration, and the rights of men." Twenty years ago, English political thinkers felt so secure of liberty that the "State" had again become an idea which claimed only enthusiastic reverence. We were taught that the State was perhaps the most potent of human forces for good, and the name called out from many their best effort and most ardent sacrifice. It summarized the conception of the public good set over against selfish private-mindedness, and of the righteous power of the whole over its parts. In short, we were trained to identify the State with the civic body of which we were members; patriotism in this sense seemed the whole duty of a man.

The war revealed the flaws in this conception, which, though clear and easy, is by those very virtues limited to an imperfect view of the truth. The shape given to the idea

of the State in Germany, especially in the debased popular form Bernhardi made current, would have repelled most Englishmen even if it had not been put in practice. If, as Treitschke says, "the State is the highest thing in the external society of men," there is no obligation beyond it, morals become identified with law, war is good, and international projects are illusory. Such theories helped the liberal peoples to realize that the national polity does not wholly embody their own moral being; and already the mere shock of the fact of war had branded on our minds the truth that "patriotism is not enough." The international mind suffered injury. But if the international spirit cannot be confined in the State, what political body can be found for it?

There are those who think that only a world-state can logically be expected to fulfil the requirements of this wandering ghost that seeks a home; who believe that nationalism and patriotism are provincial vulgarities, destined to be discarded. To them the League of Nations is useless because incomplete; it is scarcely a polity, for though it will have a permanent court of law and a "council of conciliation" which may possibly also legislate, it may well have no executive, and almost certainly will have no army, navy or taxes. These, however, are deductive reasoners, who start from what seems desirable and pass by the road of logic to their inevitable goal. The modest inductive historian, reasoning from what has been to what seems likely to be, cannot shut his eyes to the achievements and the promise of the force of nationality; and if he is also an economist of human energy, he would prefer a scheme in which room is left for national specialization. Surely, he argues, local political life is a strength, not a weakness, to a nation; cities adorn and strengthen the State; and so may nationalities

fortify and enrich the League. At the same time it is essential that it should be a chastened nationality; *ex hypothesi*, the power of each government is to recognize its barriers, acknowledge its equals, bow down to its superior, the whole. Whether or not the frog can reach the size of a bull and suffer no damage, he must never hope to become the new Great Leviathan.

A statesman who accepts the fact of nationalism on the one hand, yet feels the motion of the international mind on the other, sees that his art of politics is discredited by world-anarchy. He sees further, with shame, that the world-soul is finding expression in other materials than his. Why, he may well ask himself, is there a "Universal Postal Union" with an international legislature (the Postal Congress) and administrative (the Postal Bureau); why is there an international system to regulate "the technical unity of railways," the white slave traffic, the adoption for international motorists of "four international sign-posts," an international union for the "suppression of useless noises," and yet no world-organization for the most important of human activities—politics?

Nor will he, if he is a right-minded politician (the species is not extinct), be consoled when he observes that the churches suffer the same reproach: no branch of official Christianity keeps its unity unimpaired when its members are nationals of enemy states. He may even wonder whether an informal religious organization like the Student Christian Movement has not a more real international life than the churches. But here, as a cautious theorist, he ceases to speculate on ethical tendencies, and turning to the past, which we are told is so still and plain a page of written wisdom, he studies the lesson of modern history.

For four hundred years, Lord Acton says in the pregnant

passage quoted above, national power has followed the law of its being and tried to expand, and has been checked by the combination of the weak. He has himself shown the inevitable connection between arbitrary home government and aggressive foreign policy: a connection which, when once suggested, is plainly to be traced in the attempts at imperial domination made by Spain under Philip II, and by France under Louis XIV, and again a century later by Napoleon.¹

Starting from Lord Acton's view that progress in liberty has come through resistance to such aggression, we may hope to show also that the modern history of freedom leads toward a League of Nations as its natural fulfilment, and that only some such world-polity, however loosely constructed, can house the world-soul implicit in the theory of democracy. And finally, since the study of these four centuries shows that in each case of aggression the tyrant and his victims alike aimed at unity—the one because expanding unity is the law of power, the other because in union alone is safety—the conviction is pressed upon us that a thirst for unity is the urgent force of modern politics; that the impulse of the weak toward union is sound; and that in the conqueror's ambition lurks an implied dualism which foredooms his hopes to failure.

It is the prerogative of some great men to combine in their own personality even the contradictory ideas of their times. In Philip II were incarnate the conceptions of the supreme State and the Universal Church. Believing himself, as Martin Hume says, to be "the junior partner with Providence," he inevitably regarded the revolt of the Neth-

¹ I do not think this is a misreading in facts. The likeness in idea and ambition between the domination of Philip and of Louis is too obvious to be missed; the *progress* in the art of combination seems to me equally convincing when once you look for it.

erlanders—Catholic and Protestant—as blasphemy, and his attempt to impose Catholic sovereigns on England and France as the plain duty of a faithful son of the Church. He bore the miscarriage of his political hopes with the same saintly fortitude as his own last illness—with the patience of one whose fortunes are linked to eternity. His sovereignty, in his own view, was scarcely even *jure divino*, for it, and it alone on earth, apparently, *was* the power and authority of God. Thus its sanction was superior even to that of the Holy See, as was proved in 1556, when he crossed swords with Pope Paul IV, and worsted that fiery veteran; though Philip might fairly plead that the Pope was acting as a Neapolitan patriot rather than as St. Peter's successor, for he was allied not only with France but with the Grand Turk.

Clearly then the dominion of Philip II could, in the nature of the case, "suffer neither limit nor equality," until the rule of "God and Your Majesty" should be uncontested over all the earth. That the heretics should have, as his ambassador in England complained, less than their due share of troubles was only a trial of faith.

In this first eruption of the modern State, the art of protecting liberty by combination was evidently not understood. Never was patriotism more heroic than that of the Dutch citizen soldiers who lost Haarlem and saved Leyden; never more ineffectual. Nor were Englishmen behind in devotion or initiative. English volunteers fought in the Netherlands, if the Nassau brothers fought at Moncontour; and Drake raided the ports of Spanish America long before war was declared between the governments. When Winter sailed in 1560 to help the Scots against the Guises, he had orders to pick a quarrel "as of his own hand." And if governments would not back their own men, neither did they back

one another. Even when the war was avowed in 1588, Howard and the Dutch coöperated against Parma without any formal alliance. France, precipitated by the long arm of Spain into an eighth civil war, was linked by treaty with England since 1572, but after the death of the Duke of Anjou, no formal bond united the efforts of Henry of Navarre with those of Maurice, Prince of Orange, until Ivry and the capture of Breda were triumphs some years old. Not until May 24, 1596, did a Triple Alliance, offensive and defensive, join Holland, France and England against their common foe. That day made possible a League of Nations.

Defeated by England in the Channel, by Holland off Gibraltar, and flouted jointly and severally by both over all the seas of the world, Spain accepted her lesson and learned her place. No revolution effected the change, save that the great Philip made way for the little. The union of the weak had for that time frustrated the menace of a unity forced from without.

Sixty years later the danger reappeared; Louis XIV, himself half a Spaniard and the husband of a Spanish wife, flaunted before Europe the mantle of his great-grandfather, Philip II. The doctrine of the divine right of rulers in its complete form was set forth by him in word and act. The autocracy is as obvious in its internal as in its external consequences. The king is the State. All organs of national life other than the monarchy crumble before him like houses when a mine is sprung; and he meant that they should. He who curbed the Parliament of Paris with a haughty word at the age of fourteen, warned his son in the Memoirs written for his political guidance of the pitiful bondage suffered by a monarch (such as his cousin of England) who is "under the necessity of receiving laws from his subjects."

"It is inverting the order of things that subjects should determine or kings obey. . . . Of the many persons who compose . . . assemblies, the most ignorant . . . often . . . take the greatest liberties"; if you give them an inch, they take an ell; "for which reason a Prince who wishes to keep his people in lasting tranquillity, and bequeath his dignity unimpaired to his successor, cannot too carefully repress this unruly audacity. . . . It is impossible that in the State you will rule after me, you should find any authority which is not proud to derive from you its origin and form." Hence the downfall of Protestant, Quietist, Jansenist; hence also the unscrupulous foreign policy. For though Bossuet, who taught Louis much of his political theory, saw and accepted the consequence of his own "Politique tirée de l'Écriture Sainte"—that all other governments, even republics, have the same origin and sanction as the French monarchy—Louis in act denied this. His assaults on the Spanish Netherlands and Holland, his thefts from the German princes, his appropriation of the entire inheritance of Spain, are not really logical applications of the theory of Divine Right; they illustrate the expansive tendency of power, and they roused at last the moral opposition of the neighbors.

But Europe had forgotten the hardly learned lesson of 1596. Louis's occupation of French Flanders and of Lille excited protest indeed, and produced the Triple Alliance of the three Protestant nations. But the English Government of Charles II was cynical and the Swedish corrupt; Holland alone was in earnest, and incurred the wrath of the offended deity of France, at whose frown the alliance dissolved. Not till William III of Orange was in the saddle was *the true policy of coalition understood*; he made it real; for him it was a sufficient life-work, and a sufficient claim to the

gratitude of posterity, to have built up successively the coalition of 1672-8, the League of Augsburg, and the Grand Alliance. Marlborough took from William's dying hand the arduous command in war and diplomacy of the union of allies, which in 1713 enforced peace.

Turn over another page of history.

The French Revolution destroyed for France at least the doctrine of the divine right of kings; indeed, it strove to banish both God and the king. Yet a *conquering nationalism* survived, as characteristic of republican as of royal or imperial France. In 1792 the republic declared war on England, and it was renewed after the peace, or rather truce, of Amiens in 1802. Two years later, again, the Consulate became an Empire, but the animosity of the kingdoms allied against it was in no wise diminished. This is entirely explicable. The Allies of 1793 and 1803 were not really concerned with the government of France; it was less than nothing to them, or so they believed, how the whirlpool of democracy might seethe inside the French frontiers, so long as French troops did not invade neighboring lands. Only now, perhaps, have the course and consequences of the Russian Revolution impressed on Europe the full strangeness of that other movement, a century and a quarter ago, when the armed missionaries of the Rights of Man combined with their universalist doctrine an exclusive nationalism which even their Gallican logic has never seen to be inconsistent with the ultimate theory of democracy. The phenomenon is reproduced to-day in the "Union Sacrée." And since Napoleon, like his republican predecessors, stood for the "efficiency and splendor" of the State of France, he succeeded quite naturally to the national sovereignty. He led the armies to continual victory, extending the power of France toward Asia, grasping the greater part of Europe;

and the apostles of liberty, equality and fraternity felt no mortal shock.

For the third time, then, since the Reformation, the weak combined against the strong. In the name of reaction, of order, subjection, established bounds, the conservatives of Europe made war on behalf of international liberty—that is, of the rights of all the lesser against the greatest in the family of nations.

The fall of Napoleon revealed the weakness of this strange association of free and autocratic powers against liberal France. The empires fell into their proper place in the Holy Alliance, and England stood aside. But the Greek rebellion of 1827 called out the one great international idea evolved from the Napoleonic wars—a Concert of Europe, a self-elected Committee of Nations, which should act as the executive of the whole. On behalf of the whole, though in a halting and irregular fashion, Russia, France and England stepped between Greek and Turk to see fair play. And international law accepted even their use of force at Navarino as “pacific,” because it was in the interests of the general order, like the arrest of a criminal. At the Congress of Paris in 1856 and of Berlin in 1878 the Committee of Europe was more fully apparent. The instability of their arrangements is a by-word of diplomacy, and it is sometimes said that the Concert died of its own futility in the end of the nineteenth century; yet surely it marks, in the evolution of the world’s polity, a stage between the fleeting coalitions of war and the permanent League of Nations.

If this is a correct reading of the history of the last four hundred years, the efforts at world-dominion have all been spurred by the “torment of unity”; and against them unity has also been the only protection. Must we conclude that

the fact of political power dooms the world to an eternal dualism, an equilibrium forever unstable?

It would seem that "Realpolitik" accepts dualism. Alike in Germany and England, imperial patriots have dreamed of their own state as supreme, beneficent, dominant, awing into unity an obedient globe as Prussia has unified the German Empire, and dictating permanent peace. Such an international solution may well be called Utopian. Is not this "realist" notion of "dictating peace" itself the merest will-o'-the-wisp? Dr. Keate, it is recorded, in a sermon to Eton boys on the Beatitudes, told them, as his rhetorical enthusiasm grew, that if they were not pure in heart he would flog the whole school till they were. The attempt to dictate peace is almost as promising a scheme. Apart from psychological difficulties, however, such projects are based on a fundamental contradiction. The imperialist thinker may aim at a Pax Romana, but as a realist he acknowledges that it must be won and preserved by force of arms. Naumann, the projector of a Central Europe strong enough to disregard the rest of the world, pictures the new Super-state as defended by two great trenches scored across the face of Europe, one running from the lower Rhine to the Alps, the other from the Baltic to the Danube, "either right or left of Roumania." But whether the world-power is conceived as a fortress protected by troops in shining armor, or as a maritime empire girdled with war-ships, political dualism is admitted. That is potential war, born of the preparation for peace. It is also the denial of the supreme reality of the international mind; it is the Manichæan heresy in politics.

President Wilson, then, is the Augustine of political catholicity. He refuses to believe in the necessity and perpetuity of strife. It would be a bewildering universe in

which the impulse toward unity should go forward until the contending camps are reduced to two, and fail eternally to reduce two to one. His scheme—for the League of Nations will hereafter be fathered on him—is a bold assertion of ultimate political unity. It is the effort to build up an elastic world-state. It draws guidance and hope from American history. Wisdom, not mere necessity, federated the United States, and gave them a constitution firm enough to embody the instinct of unity, but loose enough to leave room for local liberties. How much less exacting must be the first union of nations, divided by history, language and patriotic sentiment!

Loose as the framework may be, its creation will establish two vital principles.

First, it admits that the international spirit must have a political, or rather super-political, body. This appears to be denied with prophetic passion by the Russian revolutionaries. They are the boldest of political heretics, for they deny the existence of the great Leviathan, and feel no need to create him if he does not create himself. Yet the priest of Leviathan told the world, and experience seems to confirm it, that apart from his god life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." "Nature made men citizens." The evangelist of individualism will always seize men's imagination, for he has hold of truth; he bids them remember that they are men first, and citizens only afterward—or not at all. Toiling statesmen may well listen to him, for he sees

"that City's shining spires
We travel to."

But sometimes he is so dazzled by its light that he cannot see the next step of our common way: it is to the next step that President Wilson points.

The other vital principle of the League of Nations admitted now on all hands—admitted this May¹ by the *Times*—is that the League is to be a League of *all* civilized powers willing to enter it, "enemy" or "allied." There has been a counter-opinion urging that a League embracing Germany is unthinkable, or would be foredoomed to ruin. The contrary, it is submitted, is the truth demonstrated by reason and history: a coalition can only confirm the cleavage which means perpetual strife; a League of Nations alone can preserve peace.

It has been assumed in the foregoing argument that the human instinct for union is its own justification; that it cannot be questioned, and need not be explained. Political speculation takes it for granted; a wide-spread if a weak ethical sentiment proclaims it well-nigh universal; patriotism is only an artificial concentration of the same feeling within variable limits. And political theory has outrun political fact; for until the League of Nations is a reality there has been no habitation for the root-idea of democracy. The spirit has struggled and wailed inside the bonds of nations like Ariel in his cloven pine. It made itself a temporary body in the Socialist "International"; but that, like the "lovely form" of Truth in Milton's image, has been "hewn into a thousand pieces and scattered to the four winds." Even if every joint and member should come together again, they cannot yet represent the whole peoples, as the League of Nations must do if it is to last. Here lies its gravest difficulty. There is a natural reluctance during war to imagine an organization inside which Germany and Austria would work and live in harmony with Belgium and Serbia. How can the lion and the lamb lie down together? The League of Nations faces that prob-

¹ May, 1918.

lem: "when the lion shall eat straw like the ox," there is place for him in the holy mountain.

It is no accident that the free peoples have accepted the obligation to be the world's police. The desire that small powers may pursue their lawful occasions peaceably and unthreatened, is a mere and inevitable extension of the English conception of the liberty of the subject. Only where the practice of legal freedom is a habit of national life, can governments avoid the temptation to hector and bully in diplomacy, or to dominate by war.

"Realpolitik" has got to show that it can stand the human test of reality—Time. If free and voluntary unions prove to have bonds like those with which Burke credited our Empire, "light as air, but strong as links of iron," and durable as human nature, and if the domination of one great power proves as transient in the future as in the past, the League born of liberty will be more real than the dreams of imperial patriots.

The whole thing was settled long ago by Socrates. It was argued, by Callicles, that "nature herself intimates that it is just for the better to have more than the worse, and the more powerful than the weaker. On what principle of justice did Xerxes invade Hellas, or his father the Scythians? These are the men who act . . . by Heaven! according to the law of nature. If there were a man who had sufficient force . . . the light of natural justice would shine forth." Must he not be in a miserable plight whom the reputation of justice and temperance hinders from giving more power to his friends than to his enemies, even though he be a ruler in his city? But Socrates answers that he disagrees; and that, according to him, this is not the plan of the universe; "for he who desires to be happy must pursue justice and temperance, . . . not suf-

fering his lusts to be unrestrained, and in the never-ending desire to satisfy them leading a robber's life. Such an one is a friend neither of God nor man; for he is incapable of communion (sharing), and he who is incapable of communion is incapable of friendship. And philosophers tell us, Callicles, that communion and friendship and orderliness and temperance and justice bind together heaven and earth and gods and men; and that this Universe is therefore called Cosmos, order, not disorder or misrule, my friend."

ROSE SIDGWICK.